

**April 9**

**Scriptures:** Read 1 Timothy 3

**Key Verse:** “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.” (1 Timothy 3:16)

## **Overview**

What Paul is about to say is “without controversy” or “beyond all question” (NIV). He is about to quote part of what the majority of Bible commentators see as an early Christian hymn or liturgical creed. We don’t know the full text of the hymn, so we cannot speculate as to context. What we do know is that these six statements, precisely and poetically written as they are, present solid, orthodox theology.

(1) “God was manifested in the flesh”. Foundational to Christian theology is the incarnation: God in the flesh, in human nature, in human form. Jesus Christ was born in the flesh and resurrected in the flesh, fully God and fully man.

(2) “justified [‘vindicated’, NIV] in the Spirit” — Jesus was “led by the Spirit” into the wilderness to be tested, and He triumphed over Satan “in the power of the Spirit” (Lk.4:1-4). Then, in Paul’s words, Jesus, “through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead...” (Rom.1:4 NIV). The Holy Spirit fully established Jesus’ credentials as Son of God and Son of Man.

(3) “seen by angels”. Not only did angels witness Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, but they also witnessed His exaltation (Phil.2:9-10). Even the evil powers of darkness bore witness to this (Col.2:15). He ascended into Heaven and there was revealed in His full splendor, superior to the angelic host, “a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek” (Heb.1-5:10).

(4) “preached among the Gentiles”. Jesus was Jewish; so were the apostles. He fulfilled Jewish Law and the apostles wrote a Gospel founded on “the Law and the Prophets”. Paul was the first full-time missionary to the Gentiles, and so effective was his, and subsequent, missionary efforts that Jesus became,

(5) “believed on in the world” — so much so that Gentile believers far outweigh Jewish believers numerically. In every sense of the word, the central message of Judaism — “Messiah” — has become a “light” to the nations.

(6) “received up in glory”. It’s only speculation to presume to know why reference to Christ’s ascension is made at this point, apparently out of chronological order. However, my instinct is this: one of the most glorious themes of Christianity, both then and now, is that of the Lamb of God triumphantly and majestically taking His place at the right hand of God the Father. Ultimately, our theology bows its knee to the heavenly mystery — the ultimate reality: Christ the king, forever, world without end.

## **Prayer**

Lord, we marvel at Your flawless wisdom and rejoice in the grace by which we stand. We thank You for the overwhelming assurance that Jesus, our Lord and King, reigns supreme over all.